

**MINUTES**  
**MICHIGAN STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**  
**AUGUST 28, 2003**  
**BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN**

Meeting noticed in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976.

Present: Ted Wahby, Chairman  
John Garside, Commissioner  
C. Robert Baillod, Commissioner  
Robert Bender, Commissioner

Also Present: Gloria J. Jeff, Director  
Kirk Steudle, Chief Deputy Director  
Pat Isom, Assistant Attorney General - In Charge  
Leon Hank, Chief Administrative Officer  
Rob Abent, Bureau of Multi-Modal Transportation Services  
Susan Mortel, Bureau of Transportation Planning  
Jerry Jones, Commission Auditor  
John Friend, Bureau of Highway Delivery  
Larry Tibbits, Chief Operations Officer  
Myron Frierson, Bureau of Finance and Administration  
Jackie Shinn, Office of Economic Development and Enhancement  
Denise Curl, Office of Economic Development and Enhancement  
Mike Kapp, Office of Economic Development and Enhancement  
Patricia Lockwood, Commission Advisor  
Kim Johnson, Passenger Transportation  
Tim Hoefner, UPTRAN  
Suzanne Skubick, Office of Communications  
Bob Wilks, Office of Communications  
John Polasek, Bureau of Highway Development  
Bobbi Welke, Southwest Region Engineer  
Paul South, Southwest Region

Excused: Betty Jean Awrey, Vice Chairwoman  
Lowell Jackson, Commissioner

A list of all others present is attached to the official minutes.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wahby at 9:02 a.m. in the MT 134 Room at Lake Michigan College M- TEC Campus, 400 Klock Road, Benton Harbor, Michigan. Commissioner Awrey was excused due to death in the family.

**I. COMMISSION MINUTES**

Chairman entertained a motion for approval of the minutes of the State Transportation meeting of July 31, 2003.

Moved by Commissioner Garside, with support from Commissioner Bender, to approve the minutes of the Commission meeting of July 31, 2003. MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Wahby thanked the Cornerstone Alliance Group for their hospitality the previous day and evening.

The Chair called on Director Jeff for the Director's Report.

**II. DIRECTOR'S REPORT - DIRECTOR GLORIA J. JEFF**

Director Jeff reported the items she would be briefing the STC on: Transportation Budget 2003-2004 Update, Update Blackout 2003, and Enhancement Check Presentation to the Village of Stevensville.

Before beginning her report, Director Jeff briefly covered the three days in Benton Harbor-St. Joseph area. TEAM MDOT had an opportunity to make a difference in the community. Transportation being about mobility, quality of life, and economic well being, and we managed to do in the last couple of days, ego transferring of property, opening of US-31.

The Director's remarks are paraphrased as follows:

Transportation Budget 2003-2004 Update

Last budget season was a challenge. State government was faced with a \$1.7 billion deficit. On August 11, Governor Granholm signed the MDOT budget, which basically follows the recommendations the Governor has provided. When we looked at this particular budget, we had anticipated an increase in the diesel tax to bring it into parity with the fuel tax, which was knocked down. One of the recommendations come forth was for the reduction of the economic development fund. In these very challenging times, we were able to retain \$13 million EDF funds for Transportation. Various fees increased, e.g. trailer registration which also went from annual to lifetime, and state revenue estimates increased, Administration Collection Fund established to offset SOS grant from MTF. Also, Preserve First remains intact, thereby keeping the Commission promise.

#### Update Blackout 2003

Director Jeff remarked TEAM MDOT was extraordinary. TEAM MDOT was able to respond needs in SE Michigan, in context working with city of Detroit in terms of their response plan. Governor Granholm requested emergency generators for the city of Detroit. MDOT s f all stepped up to the table in getting needs met. Emergency costs will be submitted for reimbursement under Emergency Act with Federal government.

#### Enhancement Check Presentation to the Village of Stevensville

President Michelle Gest, President of Village Council, came forward to receive the check for \$170,000 from Chair Wahby and Director Jeff.

Chairman Wahby gave special thanks to Bobbi Welke, Region Engineer and Paul South, for all their efforts and for doing a great job.

### **III. OVERSIGHT**

Commission Advisor, Pat Lockwood made announcements to Commission members regarding Item 116 and 117, subject to internal review, Item 3 was withdrawn, and Supplemental A was added to the packet.

#### Bid Letting Pre-Approvals (Exhibit A-I) - Myron Frierson

Frierson gave a summary of the August 1<sup>st</sup> letting. He noted due to blackout the August 15 letting was postponed until August 20. An estimated five bids per project, for August 1<sup>st</sup>, bids were coming in at 8% lower for state jobs on engineer's estimate and 11% lower for local projects. Mr. Frierson asked for Commission approval for September 5 letting \$176 million in projects in comparison to Fiscal 2002, of \$46 million projects. Commission Bender moved, with support from Commissioner Garside. MOTION CARRIED.

#### Letting Exceptions Agenda (Exhibit A-2) - John Polasek

Mr. Polasek explained project bid exceeded 10%; 10.01% over the estimate, due to multi-faceted project with resurfacing, as well as being harder to estimate, expedited schedule added to increased costs. Chairman Wahby asked if there were any other questions. Commissioner Bender moved, with support from Commissioner Garside. MOTION PASSED.

#### Bid Letting Not Pre-Approved (Exhibit A-4) - Myron Frierson

\$500,000 was not pre-approved by Commission from an August 20 letting item. Commissioner Bender moved, with support from Commissioner Garside. MOTION CARRIED.

#### IV. PRESENTATIONS

##### Congressman Fred Upton

Did not show.

##### Region Transportation Investment Report - Bobbi Welke, Region Engineer & Jeff Noel, Executive Director of Cornerstone Alliance

Ms. Welke and Mr. Noel both gave information on long range plan and investment strategies, infrastructure and workforce investments, and talked at length about the projects the community has been able to accomplish (e.g. Elisha Gray Enterprise Park, Edgewater Area, and Harbor Town), thanks to MDOT.

##### Multi Modal Presentation - Southwest Region - Tim Hoeffner

Slide presentations were presented by Mr. Hoeffner regarding Multi-Modal Transportation in Southwest Michigan (see attached).

Commissioner Baillo d asked if the 300,000 riders were different people or were they 50,000 people who rode six times each. Mr. Hoeffner stated they were probably 50,000 people total.

##### Asset Management Council Report/Budget - Chairman Carmine Palombo

Ms. Lockwood introduced Mr. Palombo who proceeded to give the Commission an update of employees trained to date in data collection. He stated that they will be able to meet their deadline of completing the data collection this year. Thus far, 14 counties have been completed, 4 counties are in progress. They have trained 290 city/county employees. Cooperation has been great. MDOT staff is doing a great job of keeping everyone apprised. Mr. Palombo also asked for the Commission's approval on the 05 budget. Commissioner Bender moved, seconded by Commission Baillo d. MOTION CARRIED.

##### Proposed 2004 State Transportation Meeting Schedule

Chairman Wahby relayed requested locations to hold the Commission meetings, i.e. 1) Port Authority of Detroit; Curtis Hertel made the request; 2) Port Huron, 3) Grand Rapids, and 4) MRS commitment for Jackson. This will be discussed at the September meeting.

Chairman Wahby gave a Region rundown of visits from 1980 to present: Superior 14 times, North 14 times, Grand 4 times, Bay 4 times, Metro 14 times, SW 7 times, and University 3 times.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ron Griffin, Supervisor - St. Joseph Charter Township

Mr. Griffin had three concerns regarding I-94: 1) Traffic levels are dangerously high, would like costs recovery pertaining to traffic accidents, 2) Accidents that shut down I-94 divert traffic to local, and 3) Recommended that a radio alert system be put in place to advise travelers on AM/FM, etc. on traffic conditions. Chair Wahby asked Director Jeff to respond to Mr. Griffin.

Director Jeff said we working with MSP for an alert system for statewide in general. MDOT has already come through and identified emergency routes associated with local roadway system. Cost recovery has not been discussed to date. Director suggested he take with Engineer Welke to see what opportunities may be available.

Robert Judd, Chairman - Twin Cities Area Transportation Policy Committee

Mr. Judd stated that the I-94 Business Loop (Lakeshore Drive) is a good example of the willingness of the MDOT professional staff to listen to local concerns and try to meet the needs of the region. The Coloma Transportation Service Center and the Kalamazoo Regional Office have both spent the time and effort to physically observe and to meet with local engineering staffs to review maintenance priorities in light of the continuing deterioration of Lake shore Drive (I -94 BL) through St. Joseph. MDOT personnel have made significant efforts to reevaluate priorities and schedules to address the most severe conditions. Standing water, poor drainage, broken concrete, temporary patches, and broken or non-existent curbs are the most obvious problems. This is a frustrating situation for all parties. Of course, the City of St. Joseph and the surrounding townships want these serious conditions rectified. But equally, the regional MDOT staffs are hampered by the lack of sufficient funds to resolve these types of problems. Mr. Judd asked the Transportation Commission to establish policies that encourage progressive strategies to increase flexibility and available funding at the regional office and local TSC levels to give relief to these serious conditions.

Mr. Judd is a City Commissioner and serves on the Michigan Municipal League (MML) Transportation Infrastructure and Environmental Affairs Committee. Mr. Judd expects the MML to make a recommendation to increase fuel taxes. The solution to our needs is a bigger pie, not a continuing debate about which need is greater with the existing pie.

Mr. Judd also recognized the contribution of MDOT to the revitalization of the Edgewater area as part of the team, which includes the cities of Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Cornerstone Alliance, Whirlpool, and MDEQ. Edgewater as it is today, and will become in the next years, is a clear example of cooperation at the local level, private sector, and the state through MDOT and MDEQ.

Larry Koepfe, Senior Planner - Southwestern Michigan Council

Mr. Koepfe talked about the frequency of closures on I-94 due to accidents. He feels that local roads and emergency routes are not well marked and are unable to adequately handle the volumes for extended periods of time. Mr. Koepfe suggested a Radio Broadcast Response system be created for both I-94 and I-196 from the state line to mile marker 39 (I-94) and marker 25 (I-196). Suggested features would be: AM radio, FM radio, CB radio, Cellular (taped recorded message). He suggested content would be: tourism message, amber alert, weather advisory, accident and detour advisory routes, evacuation of nuclear power plant sites, and evacuation of major cities into Michigan. Suggested operations would be by use of: Michigan State Police, use of state 800 MHz towers, and short range radio broadcast, one mile for local use.

Chairman Wahby heard only great comments, in regards to our great new Director, very positive changes, TEAM MDOT, administration, very committed to program. Very proud to be part of this group because see a lot of good things happening. Thanks to Director, employees

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the Chairman declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:12 a.m.

The next meeting of the Michigan State Transportation Commission will be held in Lansing, Michigan, on September 25, 2003, commencing at the hour of approximately 9:00 a.m.

Recorded by Denise R. Curl, Office of Economic Development and Enhancement.

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Patricia A. Lockwood  
Commission Advisor

Attachments